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ART. VII.—*Helen.*

Helen: a Tale by MARIA EDGEWORTH. In two volumes. Philadelphia. 1834.

WE know not when we have been more delighted, either as reviewers or as men, with any occurrence in the literary world, than with the opportunity of giving another welcome to Miss Edgeworth, the friend of our earlier years. And yet we must confess that our pleasure was mingled with many fears; for it was possible, that the recollection of the interest her writings used to inspire, might be stronger than the reality; there was a chance too, that during her long silence she might have lost something of her power, or that the public taste, so long used to the excitement of Scott's romances, might be less disposed than formerly to relish that quiet and unassuming excellence, which distinguishes Miss Edgeworth's writings. But whatever sentiments prevailed in our minds,—whether hopes or fears,—we believe that all intelligent readers will agree with us in the acknowledgment, that the fears were uncalled for, and the hopes have been exceeded. We remember her as the morning star, whose radiance was lost for a time in the excessive brightness of the rising sun; now we see her reappearing more beautiful than ever as the planet of evening, after that sun has left the sky.

Works of this description are constantly exerting an immense power upon those who read them; and what numbers that phrase embraces in this reading age, when all who read anything are familiar with Miss Edgeworth and Scott! No one is on his guard against injurious impressions; when any one takes them up, he surrenders his mind to the excitement, and floats along like the drifting vessel, which takes no note of its bearings. He may be carried far aside from the right way, without the least suspicion that all is not well, and should he be a young reader, even if he perceive that injury has been done to his moral feelings, he may not have energy to repair it. The moral character of Scott's works is uniformly good, and that it is so, is indeed a blessing to the world. But another set of writers, such as the author of Vivian Grey, have sprung up since his decline, and have exerted a contrary influence, to

an extent, which, considering their worthlessness in a literary point of view, is really surprising. Those who read such books are not aware perhaps of any bad effect produced upon their minds ; but the simple circumstance *that they can read them*, is enough to show that injury is done. For those who take pleasure in such things are morally incapable of relishing better, and the depraved appetite grows by indulgence, till the health of the soul is irrecoverably lost. Truly, when gamesters, robbers and assassins, are served up to us as high-minded and honorable men ; when the vile scandal of the day, or the history of sensuality is brought out to light, with only a thin veil of sentiment to cover its shame ; when dungeons and death-beds are resorted to for narratives and scenes, which hide the defect of power in the writers, by supplying a powerful interest of their own ; and when all this is received, without suspicion either of its moral purity or its intellectual pretensions, it is certain that some injury is already done. We do not suppose that such works will gain much favor with those who are truly enlightened ; but it is too much to suppose that the great body of readers answer to that description.

But we have no disposition to act the part of Don Quixote at the puppet show, making an assault on works which are insignificant enough in themselves, and which are perhaps already forgotten by many of our readers. We refer to them, only by way of contrast, to show the value of a writer like Miss Edgeworth, who comes forward with authority, speaks in a voice to which all must listen, and recalls the public taste to truth and nature. We admire, most of all, the moral bearing of her writings ; with a manner which is neither affected, assuming nor professional, she causes this to be felt in almost every page. The professed moral of such writings is not the thing to be most regarded ; for often, where no fault can be found with the sign which the writer hangs out, scenes and descriptions are introduced, which leave no good impression. When the plays acted in this city were called ‘moral lectures,’ in order to evade the law, it is not probable that the morality of the performance constituted its principal attraction, nor, when a writer makes the same profession in order to conciliate the great law of public opinion, are we always sure of finding it in any part of the work after the preface or title page. The only way to determine what the actual moral is, must be to ascertain what decided impression is left upon the mind after

reading it. If it produce a sort of kind regard for the guilty and a disposition to smile at their crimes ; if it lessen the disgust which every pure mind feels for coarseness and sensuality ; if it bring us into any thing like a friendly familiarity with characters whom we ought to shun, whether in actual life or poetical description, then, whatever may be the *moral* of the work, its morality will be found wanting.

Many writers feel as if all the demands of morality were answered by poetical justice, as it is called, by which is meant the retribution which, at the close of the work, makes the good prosperous, and brings the guilty to adversity and shame. But this is a rule which has nothing like it in nature ; the world does not witness such an equal providence, and to make prosperity the invariable result of excellence, is to prepare many to be disappointed. But this kind of retribution is assigned by inferior hands : they think that they have done enough when they have given riches and honor to the deserving, a process which requires nothing more than a movement of the pen. The true poetical justice, the only one which answers the claims of morality, is to conciliate the respect and attachment of the reader for the deserving, and to show that the unworthy are never to be envied, whatever prosperity they may seem to enjoy. When Richardson made his *Clarissa* unfortunate in the closing scenes, a result which was anticipated by his readers, since the work appeared, like Gibbon's history, in volumes successive and far between, a general outcry was raised by her admirers, who thought that to marry her happily was the least that he could do ; but the author judiciously stopped his ears and held fast to his original plan. The good sense of Shakspeare, in bringing Cordelia to the grave, when lengthened life would only have been 'stretching her out longer on the rack of the rough world,' has been thought so unsuitable to dramatic representation, that it has been altered by common consent ; unsuited to the stage it may be, but it is not unsuited to truth and nature. In the *Heart of Mid-Lothian*, Scott has given rank and luxury to the less worthy sister, which he has denied to the other : in this he was right ; his retribution consisting in the happiness and admiration which Jeanie secured by her virtue, while all the seeming splendor of Effie was but the gilding of her woe.

The fate of novels, which have been written as vehicles for religious influences, shows that a formal moral will not always

give a moral impression. They have, almost without exception, been decided failures ; the writers have been so entirely different in habits of thought and feeling from those whom they wished to conciliate, that all their attempts to recommend the subject have produced an effect precisely the reverse of that which they intended. Miss Edgeworth's works certainly are not what are called religious : nor do we know her sentiments in respect to the religion which we profess ; she has been coarsely railed against, for her silence, by some who professed a zeal for Christianity, but has not to our knowledge explicitly avowed her opinions. Still it is certain, that the morality of her writings is the same with that which Christianity enjoins ; her literary influence aids the cause of improvement, which Christians have at heart. It was beautifully said by the lamented Frisbie, that ' she has stretched forth a powerful hand to aid the impotent in virtue ; and had she added, " in the name of Jesus of Nazareth," we might almost have expected miracles from her touch.' But we are not sure, that a great proportion of those whose minds she wished to reach, the English fashionable world for example, would have listened so patiently to one who avowed her purpose to instruct them, though we should certainly rejoice to be able to infer more decidedly from her expressions, that she regards Christianity as a revelation from on high. And yet, whatever her faith may be, it is but just to say that her works have done more good, than all the professedly religious novels that have been written since the creation of the world.

But while the writers of works, professedly moral, have often failed in an undertaking, which requires not merely good intentions but knowledge of the world and address, as well as intellectual power, they have been guilty only of mistake ; we wish we could say as much for others, who are less easily forgiven. The former class of writers have made virtue and religion repulsive, but those to whom we allude have labored to make vice attractive and engaging : not that such was their direct object in writing ; but such was the effect of their writings, and they had not sufficient respect for morality to abstain from these dishonorable arts of attraction. We are sorry to say that a great proportion of the older English novels are liable to this censure, nor can it all be excused by ascribing it to the times in which they appeared, which would account for coarseness perhaps, but must not be allowed to throw its broad mantle

over indecent and sensual immorality. Richardson perhaps shows how far this excuse may be reasonably pleaded ; indelicate enough in all conscience some of his pages are, but his aim was always to produce a moral impression. Fielding, a much greater genius, was as much beneath him in all moral respects, as he was above him in intellectual power. It was hardly to be expected that one, who led a life of vulgar dissipation in the lanes and taverns of London, and cared not what his own associates were, would be particular in the society which he introduced to his readers ; and yet, strange to say, he was more decent in this respect than Smollett, who was a man of better life, and yet seemed to revel with a sort of insane delight in all the off-scouring of the world. Such writers have their reward in the change of moral feeling, which, if it tolerate them in one age, will give them up in the next ; they are gradually lifted to the highest shelf of the bookcase, and those who read them as part of the national literature, can hardly open them without a feeling of shame.

By estimating the injury to the cause of good morals which such writers have done, we can form some just idea of the good which is done by Miss Edgeworth and Scott, not to speak of others who, in their various degrees, follow the same high examples. Such offenders against the moral and social law are to be found even now, and the world is disposed to pass over their transgressions somewhat too lightly. Even Dr. Johnson, moralist though he was, lent his authority to this view of the subject when he said, ‘ Men do not become highwaymen because Macheath is acquitted on the stage.’ This however is but an ingenious evasion of the question ; the true inquiry is, whether the admiration inspired by the gay bold-faced villain is not injurious to the cause of good morals. We think there is no doubt of it ; for those who permit themselves to admire such characters will not be likely to form a taste for better, either in actual or imaginary life ; and such admiration, though it may not make men robbers, may nevertheless influence them unhappily to a great extent, without ever bringing them to the prison or the halter. We hold it evident that such writings may do harm : and in the same proportion, we believe that Miss Edgeworth does good by substituting in their place works of greater ability and attraction, which, so far as they have any effect, shall tend to elevate and purify the mind.

So far, these works have a good effect, but we believe that

the service works of imagination can render to the cause of virtue, is greatly overrated. Bad ones can do harm in a proportion far greater, than good ones can do good. The passive impressions which the mind receives in reading them, if they are works immoral in their bearing, can easily undermine principles of virtue, a process which requires little exertion, since, if not sustained and exercised, they are always ready to die of themselves: all this can be done in the lethargy and inaction of the soul. And were it enough to give virtuous impressions, the better sort of these works of fiction might have credit for more than can now be fairly ascribed to them. But good impressions do not make good men; neither is an aversion to bad characters sufficient to make good men: to render much to the cause of virtue it is necessary to form principles, which is more than passive impressions ever had power to do. Scott, in discussing this subject, arrives at the conclusion that novels may inspire generous sentiments, and this he considers their highest praise. But if the mind is passive in reading them, they cannot have much power even to do this; and we believe that it will be found on inquiry, that the feelings which they inspire are hollow and unsubstantial,—not such as lead to action, but such as flatter and deceive their possessor. When once they are brought to the trial, it is evidently seen, that only the moral energy of the soul and the stern discipline of real life can form principles of virtue firm enough to face the winds and storms. Yet, though we are not prepared to allow that novels can do so much good as some ascribe to them, we believe that Miss Edgeworth's exert a happier influence than any other, without a single exception; for beside the whole impression, which is always in favor of truth, good sense, and virtue, there are maxims of admirable wisdom interwoven in the texture of the work, as striking as those of *De Retz*, showing a profound and intimate acquaintance with the human heart. They all tend to establish the fact, that the straight and narrow way of duty, though it may sometimes be hard to travel, will sooner or later appear to be the only path of pleasantness and peace.

When we praise the moral effect of Miss Edgeworth's writings, we consider ourselves as bearing testimony not only to her good intentions, but to her ability also; for to desire to produce such an effect is one thing, and actually to produce it is another. The writer, who aims at it without success, does more harm than good, just as they who aim at wit without suc-

ceeding, are not merely spiritless, but actually offensive. And yet to arrange the circumstances of their story, to keep light and graceful control over the movements of the characters, to regulate the suggestions, narratives, and descriptions which combine to give the moral impression; requires a comprehension which very few possess. We are told that Andrew Fair-service's horse used three legs for the purpose of progression, and flourished the fourth in the air by way of accompaniment; in this, he affords a lively illustration of the course of sundry novels, except that in them the accompaniment generally bears a greater proportion to the enginery employed in efficient action; and the truth is, that the good sense, which subdues all the elements of character and action into harmonious order, is an intellectual gift, peculiar to masters in this department of writing. Fielding possessed it without doubt; but his tastes and habits made him a painter of manners rather than of nature; Scott is the one who has displayed it in its greatest perfection; a few bold touches of his pencil set the scene and character almost visibly before our eyes; and Miss Edgeworth, though her range is not so wide, has shown almost equal gracefulness and freedom in her management of stories and characters within the circle of ordinary life, where, had she failed, almost every reader could, from his own experience, have pronounced her work unnatural, and have pointed out where and what was wanting.

We have dwelt, perhaps too long for the patience of our readers, on the moral bearing of Miss Edgeworth's writings, because, though they are admirable in every respect, this is the point in which they have rendered most service to the world. No writers of fiction, before her, ever attempted to do more than amuse an idle hour, or if any did try to convey instruction in this pleasing form, their morality was so heavy, that they often threw it overboard to save their craft from sinking; certainly the greater proportion of them have sailed in ballast so far as respected morality. Even now it is surprising to see with what impudence certain novelists insult the common sense and decency of mankind; and with what eagerness many, who might be supposed to know better, receive their accounts of English high life, their lofty sentiment and fine writing, admiring the grace and elegance which these writers add to their talent by a familiarity with the ways of the world; while the only high life which the author has ever seen, is that

which is visible from his garret window, and his art of style consists in furnishing the reader with impressions instead of ideas,—impressions which strike the young sentimentalist as exceedingly magnificent, because, being undefined, he cannot discern their form. If such productions can find favor with any class of readers now, what would have been the state of things had Miss Edgeworth never existed? Happily these works are of a fashion which passes away. The same principle of corruption in them, by which they become so pestilential to readers, is a principle of decay to themselves; the very light that seems to play round them is phosphoric,—generated by their own dissolution, and far from being attractive to those who understand its nature, warns them that their senses will be offended if they approach too nigh. Meantime the writer, who, like Miss Edgeworth, unites fine moral taste with talent, shines with the steady brightness of a star, which, once risen, shall never more go down.

For some time after Miss Edgeworth had written with great reputation and success, it was supposed that she was under obligation to her father for his literary aid. But it would seem that he did nothing more than write an occasional preface, to introduce her the more gracefully to the notice of the world. His memoirs, written by himself, were published by his daughter after his death, and they show conclusively, that his turn of mind was such that mechanical assistance was all he would be likely to give. He seems to have been a man of active mind and restless habits, with a strong taste for mechanical inventions. We remember once meeting an insane projector, who was engaged in constructing a steam engine for eradicating the stumps of trees in newly settled countries; he remarked, that it would soon be in the hands of every backwoodsman, since, after simplifying the machinery a little, he should be able to afford it for three thousand dollars. Mr. Edgeworth's plans seem to have been of the same grotesque description,—such as a moveable treadmill, to which Dr. Johnson's remark would apply, that in ordinary cases a man moved only himself, but the great excellence of this invention was, that it required him to move himself and the machine too. Among others was a phaeton, with a single wheel like a wheelbarrow, in which something was gained in point of friction, though at considerable expense in regard to security. He also had a plan for carrying manure about his farm in a balloon, though wheth-

er it was for the sake of easy conveyance, or of improving the article by an *aëronautic* expedition, does not readily appear. These however were harmless oddities, and he seems to have led an active, busy and useful life, though entirely without such habits of thought, as would have qualified him to aid his accomplished daughter to any considerable extent in her literary labors. There was evidently a strong feeling of mutual admiration existing between them: he felt himself honored by the homage which was paid to her, and she in turn ascribed all her success to his early counsels and instructions. We should be glad to forget, if we could, that her *memoirs*, when they appeared about fourteen years ago, were the subject of one of those brutal attacks, in which a certain English review has always indulged; we had supposed that the day of such iniquities was over, but we see another late outpouring from the same source upon Miss Martineau, which one would suppose might furnish a regale better suited to the Hottentot circles, than those of England.

One of the more important subjects which engaged the attention of Mr. Edgeworth, was that of early education, and he seems to have recommended to his daughter the employment of writing for the young, by which she has secured the lasting gratitude and affection of that important part of the human race. There is scarcely an intelligent child in America, who does not love her name; and this is, in our opinion, the highest honor which ambition can desire or hearts bestow. Miss Edgeworth seems to have considered her father as opening a new path in the field of education; his plan was to note down anecdotes of the child, and in that way to form an accurate knowledge of its character, so as to be able to tell the kind of discipline and influence to which it needs to be subjected. Here it is only the mechanical process which is new: it is only a more systematic way of taking those observations of the minds, habits and feelings of the young, which judicious parents and teachers have always taken for their guidance in the discharge of their trust. Neither is it probable that such incidents, as would be thought sufficiently important to deserve insertion in such a journal, would be as good indications of character as many which would be caught by the glance of an observing eye. The practice which he recommended was better suited to his daughter's purpose of writing for the young; accordingly many of the incidents in her youthful tales, and possibly some

that seem most unlikely ever to have happened, were actual incidents, drawn from real life and preserved in a minute registry of this description. We have been assured that she made it her practice, in order to secure exact representations of the Irish, to take notes of incidents and expressions when her father was acting as a magistrate, and sometimes also to use, for the same purpose, whatever struck her as worth preserving in the intercourse of social life.

Miss Edgeworth was quite young when she began the literary career, which has been so long and brilliant. Her *Essay on Self-Justification* was written in 1787, and published in 1795, probably without her name, since she is generally understood to have made her first appearance in 1798, when she published the *Treatise on Practical Education*, in conjunction with her father. *Castle Rackrent* appeared in 1800, and was enough to establish her reputation as a painter of Irish nature. The incidents, which supplied the outline of the story, are believed to have been furnished by the history of her own ancestors, but the story is but a small part of its merit; the conversation in which it is told is the evidence of her talent, and probably this was never surpassed by any other describer of the Irish manners, nor by any other passages in her own writings. It is surprising to see how much can be done for his own country by a powerful writer, who opens before the eyes of the world a new vein of national character, for intelligent minds to explore. Scott has spread a rich mantle of poetical associations over all the blue hills of his native land; and he himself assures us, that it was his ambition to do for his country what Miss Edgeworth had done for her own green isle,—to introduce its natives to those of the sister kingdom in a favorable light,—which induced him to undertake that new literary enterprise, that placed him in such an enviable position before the eyes of the world, at the moment when his poetical inspiration seemed dying away.

The *Moral Tales* were published in 1801, with a view of furnishing to the young a kind of reading that should gratify the youthful taste, without exciting too much of the passion for fictitious narrative; we can certainly say of her, that she has come nearer to success than any other writer, but whether it be possible to indulge the taste without the danger of its becoming too engrossing, is a question not easily decided. One would have said beforehand, that the effect of Scott's

works would be, to drive an army of worthless novels out of circulation, by making the world more fastidious in its choice ; but we see, on the contrary, that the taste becomes so ravenous, that it no longer cares for selection, but devours with voracious appetite the wretched materials with which the booksellers take care to keep it supplied. We cannot speak with much decision on the subject, but we fear that the effect of Miss Edgeworth's tales for the young may have been similar to this. If so, however, it is an effect for which she is not answerable. Neither is the danger, if there be any, to be avoided in the way which has been attempted by some inferior writers,—by taking scenes, incidents and characters from real life. It is the boast of writers of religious stories, for example, that what they narrate and describe is true. Still their description is not reality ; it is only the picture of reality, and there seems to be no reason why such a picture should better answer the purpose of actual experience in making one acquainted with real life, than the fancy piece which is true to nature. We are confident that Miss Edgeworth's stories have more truth in them,—more truth to fact, certainly more truth to nature, than hundreds of those which profess to describe events that have actually happened. No one can help admiring the easy and graceful way in which she manages her incidents and characters, so as to make all bear upon the great purpose of instruction,—the particular moral which she endeavors to impress. *St. Pierre's Paul and Virginia* is almost the only work, which compares in this respect with her writings for the young : and in that delightful tale, it may be a fault, that the philosophy which the writer had at heart is so little essential to the story, that the young reader listens with impatience when it is pointed out to him, dismisses it from his mind, and never associates it with the work again.

The *Popular Tales* appeared in 1804, and were intended for a class who were not much in the habit of reading. The times are wonderfully changed in the course of thirty years, and the boundary of the reading public extended further than would have been thought possible a quarter of a century ago. We do not look upon this change as approaching the miraculous ; the efforts of the human mind have probably always been as great, comparatively speaking, as in the last few years,—and the taste for reading only resembles other comforts, which pass into a greater number of hands in each successive

generation : the great difference is, that in former times the demand was not sufficient to call for a very active supply ; whereas now, a thousand pens and a million presses are kept in constant motion for ' the many,' and their wants are even too much regarded if they make writers regardless of the wants and judgment of the few. Miss Edgeworth, who has always endeavored to lay the foundations of her fame in usefulness, wrote the *Popular Tales* for the benefit of those who were not much given to other kinds of reading, and nothing can be better than the manner in which maxims of prudence and practical good sense are illustrated and enjoined. ' *Lame Jervas*,' for example, shows from what small beginnings a youth may raise himself by integrity and application ; ' *The Will*' illustrates the manner in which industry and attention secure the rewards, which genius considers as its own ; ' *The Manufacturers*' offers a warning to those, who are meanly ambitious of rising into higher circles, where they are despised and insulted, while they might have been useful and honored among their former friends ; ' *Tomorrow*' is a powerful representation of the effect of delay, that false dictate of a treacherous heart, which is perpetually betraying thousands into ruin and shame ; and ' *The Contrast*,' one of the finest narratives that ever were written, shows that the effect of moral education does not depend nearly as much on chance or accidental influence, as is generally supposed. They who have rightly cultivated the minds of their children, and sown good seed in their hearts, with patient and interested care, are in general as sure of reaping the fruit of their labor, as the husbandman is of enjoying his happy harvest-home in return for his exertions in the spring.

The *Fashionable Tales* followed the *Popular*, after an interval of several years. It is evident enough that they were not written by the booksellers' instigation, for of ' *The Dun*,' and ' *Ennui*,' which appeared together in 1809, the former was written in 1802, and the latter two years later,—five years before it was given to the world. The story of *Lord Glenthorn* is one of deep interest and attraction ; the discovery which deprives him of his rank and title, and the moral energy by which he clears out a path for himself to prosperity and fame, are doubtless exceedingly improbable events ; but so skilfully is the story managed, that the reader takes no notice of the circumstance till it is pointed out by the critic, who, in this case as in many others, receives slender thanks for his endeavors to

enlighten the public mind. Of all the *Fashionable Tales*, 'Vivian' inspires the most profound interest and makes the deepest moral impression. The weakness of heart, which makes a man faithless to himself, or, to use an expressive phrase, 'his own worst enemy,'—which impels him to act without any just discernment of the consequences of his actions,—which puts him in the power of those, who are immeasurably beneath him in intellectual ability and moral feeling,—all the effects of this helplessness are represented, in that fine story, with a fearful strength of portraiture which no one can easily forget.

Among the *Tales of Fashionable Life*, was 'The Absentee,' a work well known for its admirable sketches of Irish character, and the patriotism, with which Miss Edgeworth endeavored to impress upon the owners of estates in that country, a sense of their duty in regard to their tenants. If we might credit some of the English politicians, it is the duty of the landlord to leave these dependants at the mercy of his agent, and to go, much against his will no doubt, to spend his income among strangers, this being the way in which he can best serve the interests of his country. Others, who take a more philosophical view of the subject, relieve the absentees from censure, by showing that it is the order of Providence which brings wretchedness and famine upon Ireland, and that the people are themselves to blame for coming into an over-crowded world. But those most interested in the subject have never been quite satisfied with these ingenious theories, and have of late begun to think it reasonable, that all who hold power over men shall be responsible to men for the use of that power,—a maxim, which may perhaps occasion some inconvenience to the great, but which will tend in a far greater proportion to secure the comfort and happiness of the small. The representative of a noble Irish family, miserably ambitious of being ridiculed and despised in London, in preference to being useful and honored at home,—the high-minded son, who feels the humiliation of the position in which he stands, and resolves to restore his parents to their country,—the beautiful cousin, Grace Nugent, perhaps the loveliest female portrait ever drawn,—these and the Irish characters at home and abroad, with all their originality of oddity and humor, have made this work a favorite with the public; its popularity is greater than that of any of her writings, unless perhaps we except the very last.

‘*Belinda*,’ which was written in 1800, made a considerable sensation when it first appeared. It had not the recommendation of the Irish character and humor, in which she excels ; but the description of English life was striking and animated,—even too much so to suit the taste of English critics, who fell upon her with great fury, and abused her for misrepresenting their fashionable world. The spirited sketch of Lady Delacour gave particular offence, but if we mistake not, the most offensive passages in that lady’s history were taken from real life ; such for example was the duel which she fought with another female politician ; it has always been understood, that a celebrated Duchess gave Mr. Fox an equally convincing proof of her devotion to his party. The part of this novel, which would generally be condemned as most improbable, we mean Clarence Hervey’s attempt to educate a wife, was taken from the reality in substance, though some romance is superadded to the truth. Day, the author of *Sandford and Merton*, a man of large fortune and still more abundant eccentricity, actually selected two girls from the Foundling Hospital, intending to educate them in innocence and ignorance, apart from the corrupting influence of the world. One of them was soon dismissed for want of talent, but she married a respectable tradesman, and had talent enough to make an excellent wife and mother. The other might have answered the purpose, being handsome, intelligent, and ready to receive instruction, but unfortunately her patron was disgusted with the sleeves of a gown which she happened to wear, and in consequence her chance of promotion was lost. After solemn consideration, he determined in his own mind, that he never could be happy with one who had given so signal a proof of her want of strength of mind, and therefore abandoned her forever. The result of the experiment, as described in the novel, has often been criticised as extremely improbable ; whether falling in love with a picture, or renouncing a loved one on account of her sleeves, be the more unlikely event, must be determined by those who are better versed than reviewers in matters of the heart.

‘*Patronage*’ appeared in 1813, and never was so fortunate as its predecessors in gaining public applause. Not that it does not give evidence of as much talent as any which went before it, nor because its scenes and characters are inferior to any of theirs ; the only difficulty seemed to be in the wide reach of the subject ; it contained such a variety of interest and adventure,

that there was a want of singleness in its impression, though all are made to bear upon the subject with considerable skill. The abundance of the author's materials perhaps embarrassed her a little, and this was the explanation of that want of unity of which so many complained. The letters of the sons of Mr. Percy, giving the particulars of their professional success, were thought by some to weigh heavily upon the story: such is not our opinion; but much impertinent criticism on this subject was addressed even to the author herself, who admitted its justice, though in a tone rather expressive of modesty than conviction. Her Lord Oldborough was one of those imposing characters, that at first sight make an impression, which the second reading does not confirm; he is too statue-like and unbending, savoring more of the days of Lord Chatham, who would not allow his secretaries to sit in his presence, than of these later times, when great men have lost a part of their reverence as well as power.

But without saying more of works which are familiar to all our readers, we will only remark that *Helen*, while it is equal in excellence to her best, bears little resemblance to her other writings. It is too common with those who begin to write again after long silence, to copy the manner which proved successful on former occasions; the consciousness that a high reputation is to be maintained or lost in the new adventure, often deprives the writer of courage, and he feels that he shall be satisfied, if he do not fall below his former standard. The same timidity often makes him serve up old incidents and characters in new forms, while the reader, instead of being glad to meet his old acquaintance again, is vexed to see them endeavoring to hide their respectable antiquity under a youthful dress. Miss Edgeworth has not been betrayed into this error; feeling sure that she possessed all her early strength, she has written with calm confidence, and has proved to the satisfaction of the world, that the light within has not grown pale with age.

Miss Edgeworth's object in writing *Helen*, was to inspire a reverence for the truth, and to show the evils which inevitably result from its violation. The common expressions of good feeling, in social life, usually convey more than is felt by those who use them: and the habit of exceeding the exact truth, thus formed, is very easily carried into more important matters, under the impression, that if it be right to exceed the truth in

the polite intercourse of society, it is still more excusable when the object is to give pleasure or avoid giving pain. There are many cases in which it requires great moral energy to speak the truth, while it seems as if no harm would come from suppressing it: and unless the moral principle be deep and strong, the truth will be violated without the conscience being alarmed or offended. To a great proportion of mankind, selfishness seems to constitute all the sin of falsehood, and so long as they have no selfish object to gain,—still more when they do it to serve a friend or to spare his feelings,—they do not feel as if they had done any thing which the sternest moralist need condemn. But as white lies lead on to those of a darker color, and the conscience, which has tolerated one, cannot easily take offence at another, there is danger in the least indulgence; on this account Dr. Johnson said that he would punish a child, for saying that a thing happened at one window, when it actually happened at another; because indifference to truth is the prevailing cause of falsehood; while to those who reverence the truth, no circumstances can excuse the violation of it; no temptation, no palliating reason, no benevolent intention can make the transgression light.

The heroine of the story is Helen Stanley, an orphan, educated by her uncle, a Dean of the English church, and a man of taste and fortune, who, two years before the period when the history opens, had resided with her in Florence, where they were intimate with Lord and Lady Davenant and their daughter Lady Cecilia; shortly after the Dean returned with his niece to England, he died, having exhausted his fortune by his expensive luxuries, and leaving no inheritance to his niece, but a sum of money which he had settled upon her before his affairs became disordered. She insists upon appropriating this money to the payment of his debts, in order to remove all reproach from his memory, though the sacrifice leaves her with but slender means of support.

Her former friends, the Davenants and their daughter, who meantime has married General Clarendon, retain their attachment to Helen under her altered circumstances. She is at once invited to make Clarendon Park her home, as lady Cecilia tells her, ‘by the express desire of her husband.’ But lady Cecilia, lovely and amiable though she was, had never learned to reverence the truth, and though she would have scorned a selfish falsehood, would sometimes rose-color her

representations, either for the sake of giving pleasure or to avoid giving pain. In the present case, she had given her husband to understand, that Helen had formerly promised to reside with her when she was married, and she represented to Helen, that the arrangement was made by her husband's desire ; whereas the fact was, that the General desired the company of his sister, Esther Clarendon, a lady who was both excellent and disagreeable, not discriminating between sincerity, and what Addison calls ' the silly affectation of speaking one's mind.' In this case as in all others, the truth would not only have been much better, but would have answered her immediate purpose much better ; Helen finds the General perfectly polite, but somewhat stately ; and for a time, she is perplexed to reconcile his manner with the account which lady Cecilia had given. At length she becomes convinced, that she was a resident in the house against the will of its master ; and shocked at the idea, she is on the point of retreating at once, without regarding the consequences ; but fortified by the counsels of lady Davenant, she resolves to do nothing hastily ; till one day, when it becomes necessary to determine her plans for the future, she begs leave to speak with the General, and asks it as a favor that he will deal plainly with her, and tell whether she was not holding the place in his family which another might more properly have filled. Had there been the least want of singleness of heart in our heroine on this occasion, the application would have been indelicate ; but the manner of openness and truth cannot be misunderstood ; he was struck at once with the conviction, that she was better suited than his sister, to be a companion to Lady Cecilia, having the same truth and moral courage, without that bluntness of manner, which sometimes makes a virtue even to the virtuous almost as repulsive as a sin. The scene between them on this occasion is beautiful and affecting, and entirely removes the coldness, which was owing solely to lady Cecilia's suppression of the truth. But all difficulties which originated in that source were not so easily mastered. The General, from particular circumstances, had resolved that he never would marry a woman who had loved another,—one of those resolutions which men often form, and keep till they find inducement enough to break them. Lady Cecilia, knowing this prejudice, had carefully concealed from him that she once flirted and even corresponded, when in Florence, with a man of pleasure,

one Col. D'Aubigny ; no harm could have arisen from disclosing it, but still it was concealed. When this man's name was once accidentally mentioned, Helen happened to blush, though not for herself, and Lady Cecilia, with that meanness, which seems forced on those who suppress the truth, suffered her friend to lie under the suspicion of having been once attached to the worthless libertine, who never had the least interest in her heart. Lady Cecilia did not imagine that Helen could be injured by such a suspicion ; she loved her friend very sincerely ; but having once concealed the truth from her husband, she was afterwards afraid to disclose it : what was at first a weakness on her part, became a selfish and ungenerous willingness to sacrifice her friend. Truly does Irving say that one truth concealed, like a dollar in the vaults of a bank, has a dozen paper representatives ; so it proved on this occasion ; and the consequence was, that the place which seemed to offer so pleasant a home to Helen, soon became to her little better than a house of suffering and bondage.

Lady Davenant is the person who calls forth most of Miss Edgeworth's power. In her youth, she was romantic in the best sense of the word, and gave her heart to one whom her imagination exalted above the mortal standard ; but at the time when he was engaging her affections, he had given his heart to another. When she discovered this, she released him at once from his engagements, without a word of upbraiding ; and the plan for her happiness, which her mother had so injudiciously formed, had almost become the means of breaking her heart. Instead, however, of avenging upon all others the unfaithfulness of one, she forced herself into society, and new admirers came,—among them Lord Davenant, to whom she revealed the state of her heart, but who nevertheless persevered in his endeavors to gain all the affection she was able to give. Lord Davenant was at that time a younger son, without title or fortune ; it was not till afterwards, that the death of his brothers threw rank and wealth into his hands.

When the effect of her first passion had subsided, she became ambitious ; at first she wished to distinguish herself by the power of conversation, in which Madame de Staël thinks that English ladies, without exception, are wanting ; in this she succeeded, and was ridiculed and admired, till one of her friends had the courage to warn her of the affectation in which she was indulging, and she had good sense enough to take the

suggestion as kindly as it was intended. But political ambition remained ; Lord Davenant was a man of talent, but somewhat careless of influence and applause ; she took advantage of his place as minister to ask favors for some of her acquaintance, and thus gave the impression that she exerted considerable power. While thus engrossed with public matters, she was less mindful of her duties as a mother ; and the consequence of her leaving her daughter to the care of others was, that lady Cecilia acquired that habit which afterwards involved her in so much suffering and shame. Nor was her influence with her husband always well exerted. Her mother, having exhausted her means in expensive luxuries, persuaded lady Davenant to ask a pension for her from her husband ; he could not grant it for such a purpose, and to such a person, without dishonor ; still, having once asked it, she persevered, till her unreasonableness had well nigh separated them forever. Meantime he granted the desired favor from his own private fortune, and his wife forgot her disappointment in admiration of his firm virtue, and shame for her own unworthy application. The effect of all this experience was, to make her character firm, dignified and commanding ; she never disguised from herself her own faults and errors, but saw and acknowledged them precisely as they were, and welcomed the lesson she had learned at whatever expense of feeling : we know not where the process, by which real character is formed, can be found traced by an abler hand.

About this time, Granville Beauclerc, General Clarendon's ward, appears upon the stage. Lady Cecilia, by certain suggestions, had contrived to give Helen such an embarrassment in his company, as deprived her of all presence of mind. She was very desirous that they should be agreeable to each other ; and, in order to remove Helen's blushes, told her a story, for which she herself might have blushed,—that Beauclerc was soon to be married to another. The consequence of this idle falsehood was, that she, thrown daily into his society, lost her heart before she was aware of it ; he became equally attached to her ; but when he declares his passion in the incoherent language appropriated to such occasions, she entirely misunderstands him, and he, believing himself rejected, at once takes his flight from the country. Had Lady Cecilia even then told the truth to her husband, his flight might have been arrested ; but she could not persuade herself to do this ; she found it

easier to leave him under the impression, that Helen had acted a coquettish and unworthy part; the consequence was, that her friend began to decline in the General's esteem, he being a man who esteemed openness one of the most sacred of duties, and insincerity one of the basest of crimes. It was only by writing herself to Beauclerc, and confessing what false impressions she had given, that Lady Cecilia could recall him at last.

Thus far Helen was not to blame; but now, Lady Cecilia takes the fancy that they shall always dress alike. Helen had it still in her power to withhold her uncle's legacy from the sacred purpose for which she had set it apart; without this, her means were very slender; but she had not sufficient strength of mind to resist her friend's solicitations, who made her compliance in this respect a test of affection. It was not long before she had involved herself deeply in debt, for articles of luxury which she neither wanted nor valued. But in her perplexity, which was sufficiently alarming, she retained her openness, and though dissuaded by Lady Cecilia, went at once to Lady Davenant and confessed the extravagance of which she had been guilty, declaring her purpose at the same time to sacrifice every thing rather than touch the legacy of her uncle. Unmoved, except to tears by the cold severity of her friend, Helen went through with her confession, and the result was, that her confidence retrieved her circumstances and secured the affection of her friend, where a suppression of the truth would have involved the one past all recovery, and alienated the regard of the other.

These were but the beginning of troubles. Lady Davenant was obliged to go with her husband on a foreign embassy, and, being aware of the fatal defect in her daughter's character, she was rejoiced to leave her with such a companion as Helen, in whose integrity she reposed unbounded confidence. Nor was it unworthily bestowed. But Helen was young, and Cecilia, though she had this failing, was her warm-hearted and affectionate friend. The danger was, that when an appeal was made to her affection, Helen would not have firmness to resist it, and so it proved. Certain letters, which Lady Cecilia had formerly written to Col. D'Aubigny, were forwarded with no good intention to General Clarendon, and his wife accidentally discovered the contents of the packet before it came under his hand. The discovery filled her with dismay; but instead of confessing the truth to him, she could think of no resource,

but to persuade Helen to receive the packet as her own. Their handwriting was similar,—the letters were signed with a fancy name, and if Helen could be induced to enter into this conspiracy, all might be well. The plan was proposed to Helen; every kind of solicitation was tried, and among other things, it was urged that, in Lady Davenant's state of health, the shock of a discovery might be fatal. Dreadful as it was to lend even silent aid to a wife in an attempt to deceive her husband, Helen in an evil hour consented, on receiving a promise from Cecilia, that as soon as Lady Davenant was gone, she would disclose all to her husband. That promise was never redeemed. The scene, where Helen claims the fulfilment of the promise, is so characteristic and forcible, that we are tempted to extract it, though it is rather long for our purpose.

“Your mother is safe now, Cecilia.”

“Oh yes, and thank you, thank you for that——”

“Then, now, Cecilia—your promise.”

“My promise!” Lady Cecilia's eyes opened in unfeigned astonishment. “What promise?—Oh, I recollect, I promised—did I?”

“My dear Cecilia, surely you cannot have forgotten.”

“How was it?”

“You know the reason I consented was to prevent the danger of any shock to Lady Davenant.”

“Well, I know, but what did I promise?”

The words had in reality passed Lady Cecilia's lips at the time without her at all considering them as a promise, only as a means of persuasion to bring Helen to her point.

“What *did* I promise?” repeated she.

“You said, ‘As soon as my mother is safe, as soon as she is gone, I will tell my husband all,’—Cecilia, you cannot forget what you promised.”

“Oh no, now I remember it perfectly, but I did not mean so soon. I never imagined you would claim it so soon; but some time I certainly will tell him all.”

“Do not put it off, dearest Cecilia. It must be done—let it be done to-day.”

“To-day!” Lady Cecilia almost screamed.

“I will tell you why,” said Helen.

“To-day!” repeated Lady Cecilia.

“If we let the present *now* pass,” continued Helen, “we shall lose both the power and the opportunity, believe me.”

“I have not the power, Helen, and I do not know what you mean by the opportunity,” said Cecilia.

"We have a reason now to give General Clarendon—a true good reason, for what we have done."

"Reason!" cried Lady Cecilia, "what can you mean?"

"That it was to prevent danger to your mother, and now she is safe; and if you tell him directly, he will see this was really so."

"That is true, but I cannot—wait till to-morrow, at least."

"Every day will make it more difficult. The deception will be greater and less pardonable. If we delay, it will become deliberate falsehood, a sort of conspiracy between us," said Helen.

"Conspiracy! Oh, Helen, do not use such a shocking word, when it is really nothing at all."

"Then why not tell it?" urged Helen.

"Because, though it is nothing at all in reality, yet Clarendon would think it dreadful—though I have done nothing really wrong."

"So I say—so I know," cried Helen; "therefore——"

"Therefore let me take my own time," said Cecilia. "How can you urge me so, hurrying me so terribly, and when I am but just recovered from one misery, and when you had made me so happy, and when I was thanking you with all my heart!" said Cecilia.

Helen was much moved, but answered as steadily as she could

"It seems cruel, but, indeed, I am not cruel."

"When you had raised me up," continued Cecilia, "to dash me down again, and leave me worse than ever!"

"Not worse—no, surely not worse, when your mother is safe."

"Yes, safe, thank you—but oh, Helen, have you no feeling for your own Cecilia?"

"The greatest," answered Helen, and her tears said the rest.

"You, Helen! I never could have thought you would have urged me so!"

"O, Cecilia! if you knew the pain it was to me to make you unhappy again,—but I assure you it is for your own sake. Dearest Cecilia, let me tell you all that General Clarendon said about it, and then you will know my reasons." She repeated as quickly as she could all that had passed between her and the General, and when she came to this declaration that, if Cecilia had told him plainly the fact before, he would have married with perfect confidence, and, as he believed, with increased esteem and love, Cecilia started up from the sofa on which she had thrown herself, and exclaimed,

"O that I had but known this at the time, and I *would* have told him."

"It is still time," said Helen.

"Time now?—impossible. His look this morning. Oh! that look!"

"But what is one look, my dear Cecilia, compared with a whole life of confidence and happiness?"

"A life of happiness! never, never for me, in that way, at least, never."

"In that way and no other, Cecilia, believe me. I am certain you never could endure to go on concealing this, living with him you love so, yet deceiving him."

"Deceiving!—do not call it deceiving, it is only suppressing a fact that would give him pain; and when he can have no suspicion, why give him that pain? I am afraid of nothing now but this timidity of yours—this going back. Just before you came in, Clarendon was saying how much he admired your truth and candor, how much he is obliged to you for saving him from endless misery; he said so to me, that was what made me so completely happy. I saw that it was all right for you as well as me, that you had not sunk, that you had risen in his esteem."

"But I must sink, Cecilia, in his esteem, and now it hangs upon a single point—upon my doing what I cannot do."

Then she repeated what the General had said about that perfect openness, which he was sure there would be in this case between her and Beauclerc. "You see what the General expects that I should do."

"Yes," said Cecilia, and then indeed she looked much disturbed. "I am very sorry that this notion of your telling Beauclerc came into Clarendon's head—very, very sorry, for he will not forget it. And yet, after all," continued she, "he will never ask you point blank, 'Have you told Beauclerc?'—and still more impossible that he should ask Beauclerc about it."

"Cecilia!" said Helen, "If it were only for myself, I would say no more; there is nothing I would not endure—that I would not sacrifice—even my utmost happiness."—She stopped, and blushed deeply.

"Oh my dearest Helen! do you think I could let you ever hazard that? If I thought there was the least chance of injuring you with Granville!—I would do any thing—I would throw myself at Clarendon's feet this instant."

"This instant—I wish he was here," cried Helen.

"Good heavens! do you?" cried Lady Cecilia, looking at the door with terror—she thought she heard his step.

"Yes, if you would but tell him—O let me call him!"

"Oh no, no! Spare me—spare me, I cannot speak now. I could not utter the words; I should not know what words to use. Tell him if you will, I cannot."

"May I tell him?" said Helen, eagerly.

"No, no—that would be worse; if any body tells him it must be myself."

"Then you will now—when he comes in?"

"He is coming!" cried Cecilia.

General Clarendon came to the door—it was bolted.

"In a few minutes," said Helen. Lady Cecilia did not speak, but listened, as in agony, to his receding footsteps.

"In a few minutes, Helen, did you say?—then there is nothing for me now, but to die—I wish I could—I wish I was dead."

Helen felt she was cruel, she began to doubt her own motives; she thought she had been selfish in urging Cecilia too strongly, and going to her kindly, she said,

"Take your own time, my dear Cecilia; only tell him—tell him soon."

"I will, I will indeed, when I can—but now I am quite exhausted."

"You are indeed," said Helen, "how cruel I have been!—how pale you are!"

Lady Cecilia lay down on the sofa, and Helen covered her with a soft India shawl, trembling so much herself that she could hardly stand.

"Thank you, thank you, dear, kind Helen; tell him I am going to sleep, and I am sure I hope I shall."

Helen closed the shutters—she had now done all she could; she feared she had done too much, and as she left the room, she said to herself,—“Oh, Lady Davenant! if you could see—if you knew—what it cost me!”

The natural consequence of all this was, that the General considered Helen as acting dishonorably, in not confessing her correspondence with Col. D'Aubigny to Beauclerc, who was now her professed and accepted lover. Her predicament was painful; but, fettered as she was by her engagement to Cecilia, she could only throw herself on his generosity. She did it at once, with a manner that inspired the most perfect confidence; she confessed to him that there was a mystery which she was not at liberty to explain, and begged him to trust her integrity till the time for explanation should come. He at once avows, in the most generous language, his perfect faith in her, and declares that no unworthy jealousy shall ever alienate his affection. Still the relation in which they were placed was extremely delicate; and it is one great proof of Miss Edgeworth's talent, that she is able to inspire so much

regard for Lady Cecilia, who is deeply interesting to every reader, though all detest the folly by which she sacrifices her friends to her own fancied security. This may strike some as a failure on the part of the moralist ; it appears to us in a different light ; it is the very soul of Christian morality, to pity the offender, while it condemns his crimes.

Helen was so confident that she had acted with good intentions, that she hardly confessed to herself that she was accessory to an imposture,—that she was aiding a wife to deceive a noble-minded and confiding husband. Her perplexities, great as they were, did not trouble her so much as might have been supposed ; for she did not realize to its full extent the fact, that no peace,—no reconciliation,—no prosperity can endure, except it be founded in truth.

We have no room to describe the difficulties into which this wretched stratagem of Lady Cecilia led. Lady Davenant was in Russia, in miserable health, and Helen could only take counsel of her own heart : she felt all the embarrassment which tortures an ingenuous mind, at the thought of being accessory to imposture ; she felt that she was under the stern eye of perpetual disapprobation, whenever she met the General, and much as she loved Cecilia, Helen could not disguise from herself, that her conduct throughout was treacherous and unworthy. When the family went to London, instead of being able to lose the consciousness of wrong in the pleasures of social life, they were met by a paragraph in the papers, which announced that Col. D'Aubigny's memoirs were to be published, together with his correspondence with certain ladies of fashion ; and so pointed an allusion was made to Helen, as one of those who had encouraged his attentions, that she attracted a sort of observation which it was very difficult to endure. The publication had been got up between some booksellers and certain venomous scandal-mongers in high life ; the brother of the Colonel had furnished the letters, and passages had been inserted to make them more discreditable, particularly in those of Lady Cecilia, which of themselves were before quite too affectionate for the occasion. Those concerned in preparing the work had, for reasons which it is needless to mention, taken a bitter spite to Helen, and by the use of these letters, which they ascribed to her, together with additions of their own, they thought themselves sure of destroying her reputation and breaking off her marriage. The General by private contract

puts a stop to the publication, but takes a copy to Helen, desiring her to mark the parts which she had written. Helen carries this to Cecilia, who promises to mark them with the utmost exactness, but is not faithful; the General compares the work, as marked, with copies of the correspondence which had fallen into his hands, ascertains that Helen had not marked them faithfully, and thus she is again presented to him as guilty of a deliberate falsehood. He had engaged to give her away at the marriage, but now he declares that nothing should induce him to sanction such an union.

It was but natural that the friend, for whom she had sacrificed all this, should grow cold; no sacrifices, made at the expense of principle, ever can ensure lasting gratitude, however generously made, however kindly intended. But this is not the worst; Beauclerc, having engaged in a duel with Horace Churchill, a man of the world, who had imprudently made himself responsible for the publication in which he had little share, wounds him desperately, and is obliged to fly from the country. A note from the General to Helen, announcing his determination with respect to the wedding, and giving the reasons for his change of purpose, makes Helen profoundly sensible of the degraded position in which she stands, both in his eyes and those of others. She has not lost her self-respect, and she writes a letter to him, declaring that she can no longer enjoy his hospitality, and another to Beauclerc, in which she tells him, that without any change of feeling on her part, the force of circumstances which she cannot explain, must separate them forever. Her plan was, to reside with an old house-keeper of her uncle, but Miss Clarendon, who happened to be in London, and who, in her direct way, soon satisfied herself of the real state of the case, persuaded her to accompany her into Wales, where the intelligence of the duel and the agitation of mind through which she had passed, brought her almost to the grave. Miss Clarendon is a good example of those characters, who are sometimes found in the world, who take pride in their own sincerity, till they learn to pay too little regard to the feelings of others; they do not know that sincerity is one thing, and bluntness quite another; and they do an injury to the cause of virtue, by associating a fine attribute of character with a roughness not necessarily connected with it, which inspires anger and aversion.

The later scenes, in which the mysteries of the story are de-

veloped, have a thrilling interest which Miss Edgeworth has never exceeded. Scenes of the exciting kind have not much abounded in her former writings; certainly there is nothing in them, which rivals the closing passages of this. When Helen is recalled to London to meet Lady Davenant, who is expected home from Russia, the first person she sees is Lady Cecilia, who had not even taken leave of her when she went away. We give the scene in the author's own words.

‘When they were within the last stage of London, the carriage suddenly stopped, and Helen, who was sitting far back, deep in her endless reverie, started forward—Cockburn was at the carriage door.

“My lady, coming to meet you, Miss Stanley.”

It was Cecilia herself. But Cecilia, so changed in her whole appearance, that Helen would scarcely have known her. She was so much struck that she hardly knew what was said: but the carriage doors were opened, and Lady Cecilia was beside her, and Cockburn shut the door without permitting one moment's delay, and on they drove.

Lady Cecilia was excessively agitated. Helen had not power to utter a word, and was glad that Cecilia went on speaking very fast; though she spoke without appearing to know well what she was saying: of Helen's goodness in coming so quickly, of her fears that she would never have been in time—“but she was in time,—her mother had not yet arrived. Clarendon had gone to meet her on the road, she believed—she was not quite certain.”

That seemed very extraordinary to Helen. “Not quite certain?” said she.

“No, I am not,” replied Cecilia, and she colored; her very pale cheek flushed; but she explained not at all, she left that subject, and spoke of the friends Helen had left at Llansillen—then suddenly of her mother's return—her hopes—her fears—and then, without going on to the natural idea of seeing her mother, and of how soon they should see her, began to talk of Beauclerc—of Mr. Churchill's being quite out of danger—of the General's expectation of Beauclerc's immediate return. “And then, my dearest Helen,” said she, “all will be——”

“Oh! I do not know how it will be!” cried she, her tone changing suddenly; and, from the breathless hurry in which she had been running on, sinking at once to a low broken tone, and speaking very slowly. “I cannot tell what will become of any of us. We can never be happy again—any one of us. And it is all my doing—and I cannot die. Oh! Helen, when I tell you——”

She stopped, and Miss Clarendon's warning counsel, all her own past experience, were full in Helen's mind, and, after a moment's silence, she stopped Cecilia, just as she seemed to have gathered power to speak, and begged that she would not tell her any thing that was to be kept secret. She could not, would not hear any secrets : she turned her head aside, and let down the glass, and looked out, as if determined not to be compelled to receive this confidence.

"Have you then lost all interest, all affection for me, Helen ? I deserve it !—But you need not fear me now, Helen : I have done with deception, would to Heaven I had never begun with it !"

It was the tone and look of truth—she steadily fixed her eyes upon Helen—and instead of the bright beams that used to play in those eyes, there was now a dark deep-seated sorrow, almost despair.

Helen was deeply moved : it was indeed impossible for her, it would have been impossible for any one who had any feeling, to have looked upon Lady Cecilia Clarendon at that moment, and to have recollected what she had so lately been, without pity. The friend of her childhood looked upon her with all the poignant anguish of compassion—

"Oh, my dear Cecilia ! how changed !"

Helen was not sensible that she uttered the words "how changed !"

"Changed ! yes ! I believe I am," said Lady Cecilia, in a calm voice, "very much changed in appearance, but much more in reality ; my mind is more altered than my person.

"Oh ! Helen ! if you could see into my mind at this moment, and know how completely it is changed ;—but it is all in vain now ! You have suffered, and suffered for me ! but your sufferings could not equal mine. You lost love and happiness, but still conscious of deserving both : I had both at my command, and I could enjoy neither under the consciousness, the torture of remorse."

Helen threw her arms round her, and exclaimed, "Do not think of me !—all will be well—since you have resolved on the truth, all will yet be well."

Cecilia sighed deeply and went on.—"I am sure, Helen, you were surprised that my child was born alive. At least I was. I believe its mother had not feeling enough to endanger its existence. Well, Clarendon has that comfort at all events, and as a boy, it will never put him in mind of his mother."

"Well, Helen, I had hopes of myself to the last minute ; I really and truly hoped, as I told you, that I should have had

courage to tell him all when I put the child into his arms. But his joy!—I could not dash his joy—I could not!—and then I thought I never could. I knew you would give me up; I gave up all hope of myself. I was very unhappy, and Clarendon thought I was very ill; and I acknowledged that I was anxious about you, and let all the blame fall on you, innocent, generous creature!—I heard my husband perpetually upbraiding you when he saw me ill—all, he said, the consequences of your falsehood—and all the time I knew it was my own.’

Then came the full force of sorrow and shame, which her wretched expedients had only delayed, not prevented. Her husband lost his confidence in her; and by the consequences of her artifice, she was led on to acts, which were soon detected and which changed his affection into disdain. He is represented throughout as a man of high and honorable feelings, but inflexible in his purpose, and unbounded in his abhorrence of every thing like disguise. It may easily be imagined how such a person would feel, when he discovered that the woman, to whom he had given his heart without reserve, was no longer worthy of respect or love. Her unhappiness drove her to degrading resources: she went into society, to escape the dreary solitude of home, and when she returned from her dissipation, made false excuses for being late; she involved herself in debt at the card table, and asked money of her husband under false pretences, which were easily seen through,—she was found associating with persons, whose society he thought disreputable, not that she sought such company, but she was drawn into it by her former stratagems; this too he discovers, and he does not conceal from her, that the last vestige of affection for her is gone from his heart.

They remained in a state of alienation till the time we have mentioned, when Lady Davenant returned and Helen went to London to meet her. When Helen met with her former friend, she found her greatly altered with remorse and sickness of heart. There was no mistaking the sincerity of her confession; it appeared by the test given in Moore’s beautiful line, ‘Hadst thou been a false one, thy cheek had been less pale;’ false indeed she had been, but all was thoroughly altered. When Lady Davenant returned,

‘A servant, who had been watching at the hall-door, came in—“The carriage, my lady! Lady Davenant is coming.”’

Lady Cecilia started up; they ran down stairs; the carriage

stopped, and in the imperfect light they saw the figure of Lady Davenant, scarcely altered, leaning upon General Clarendon's arm. The first sound of her voice was feebler, softer, than formerly—quite tender, when she said, as she embraced them both by turns, "My dear children!"

"You have accomplished your journey, Lady Davenant, better than you expected," said the General.

Something struck her in the tone of his voice. She turned quickly, saw her daughter lay her hand upon his arm, and saw that arm withdrawn!

They all entered the saloon—it was a blaze of light; Lady Davenant, shading her eyes with her hand, looked round at the countenances, which she had not yet seen. Lady Cecilia shrank back. The penetrating eyes turned from her, glanced at Helen, and fixed upon the General.

"What is all this?" cried she.

Helen threw her arms round Lady Davenant. "Let us think of you first, and only—be calm."

Lady Davenant broke from her, and, pressing forwards, exclaimed, "I must see my daughter—if I have still a daughter! Cecilia!"

The General moved. Lady Cecilia, who had sunk upon a chair behind him, attempted to rise. Lady Davenant stood opposite to her; the light was now full upon her face and figure; and her mother saw how it was changed! and looking back at Helen, she said, in a low, awful tone, "I see it; the black spot has spread!"

Scarcely had Lady Davenant pronounced these words, when she was seized with the most violent spasms. The General had but just time to save her from falling; he could not leave her. All was terror! Even her own woman, so long used to these attacks, said it was the worst she had ever seen, and for some time evidently feared it would terminate fatally.

At last, slowly, she came to herself, but perfectly in possession of her intellects, she sat up, looked round, saw the agony in her daughter's countenance, and holding out her hand to her, said, "Cecilia, if there is any thing that I ought to know, it should be said now."

Cecilia caught her mother's hand, and threw herself upon her knees. "Helen, Helen, stay!" cried she; "do not go, Clarendon!"

He stood leaning against the chimney-piece, motionless, while Cecilia, in a faltering voice, began; her voice gaining strength, she went on, and poured out all—even from the very beginning, that first suppression of the truth, that first cowardice, then all

that followed from that one falsehood—all—even to the last degradation, when in the power, in the presence of that bad woman, her husband found, and left her.

She shuddered as she came to the thought of that look of his, and not daring, not having once dared while she spoke, to turn towards him, her eyes fixed upon her mother's;—but, as she finished speaking, her head sank, she laid her face on the sofa beside her : she felt her mother's arm thrown over her, and she sobbed convulsively.

There was silence.

"I have still a daughter!" were the first words that broke the silence. "Not such as I might have had, but that is my own fault."

"Oh, mother!"

"I have still a daughter," repeated Lady Davenant. "There is," continued she, turning to General Clarendon, "there is a redeeming power in truth. She may yet be more worthy to be your wife than she has ever yet been!"

"Never!" exclaimed the General. His countenance was rigid as iron; then suddenly it relaxed, and going up to Helen, he said,

"I have done you injustice, Miss Stanley. I have been misled. I have done you injustice, and, by Heaven! I will do you public justice, cost me what it will. Beauclerc will be in England in a few days; at the altar I will give you to him publicly; in the face of all the world, will I mark my approbation of his choice; publicly will I repair the wrong I have done you. I will see his happiness and yours before I leave England for ever!"

Lady Cecilia started up: "Clarendon!" was all she could say.

"Yes, Lady Cecilia Clarendon," said he, all the stern fixedness of his face returning at once—"Yes, Lady Cecilia Clarendon, we separate now and for ever."

It was but natural that the General should feel deeply at having been so treated by Lady Cecilia,—nor was it unnatural, that he should be the latest to be convinced of the change in her character. Lady Davenant, who had always condemned herself severely for her neglect of Cecilia's childhood, is persuaded that she has recovered her daughter; and Miss Clarendon, with her usual plainness, declares her confidence in her sister-in-law, at the same time expressing her admiration of some generous and kind affections, which she had never observed before. These circumstances respecting Col. D'Au-

bigny would not have been known, had not Cecilia revealed them ; so that her confession was evidently not a mere acknowledgment, wrung from her by circumstances, but a full outpouring of the heart. Her husband does not relent in his determination to part from her, leaving her to enjoy his fortune in England, while he himself engages in the foreign service of his country.

But, so long as her friend was thus alienated from her husband, at the time too when she was really more than ever worthy of his love, Helen could not be happy. Still the marriage ceremony was performed ; the General gave away the bride. At the public breakfast, Lady Davenant, feeble as she was, appeared, and in presence of some of the slanderers who had contributed to bring about these unpleasant results, takes the opportunity to expose their malice, and to a sufficient extent, to undeceive the world ; but the exertion is too great for her strength.

‘ She suffered herself to be carried up the steps into her own apartment by the General, who laid her on the sofa in her dressing-room. She looked round on them, and saw that all were there whom she loved ; but there was an alteration in her appearance which struck them all, and most the General, who had least expected it. She held out her hand to him, and fixing her eyes upon him with deathful expression, calmly smiled, and said, “ You would not believe this could be ; but now you see it must be, and soon. We have no time to lose,” continued she, and moving very cautiously and feebly, she half-raised herself—“ Yes,” said she, “ a moment is granted to me, thank Heaven !” She rose with sudden power, and threw herself on her knees at the General’s feet ; it was done before he could stop her.

“ For heaven’s sake ! ” cried he, “ Lady Davenant !—I conjure you——”

She would not be raised. “ No,” said she, “ here I die, if I appeal to you in vain—to your justice, General Clarendon, to which, as far as I know, none ever appealed in vain—and shall I be the first?—a mother for her child—a dying mother for your wife—for my dear Cecilia—once dear to you.”

His face was instantly covered with his hands.

“ Not to your love,” continued she—“ if that be gone—to your justice I appeal, and must be heard, if you are what I think you : if you are not, why, go—go, instantly—go, and leave your wife, innocent as she is, to be deemed guilty—Part from her, at the moment when the only fault she committed has been repaired—

Throw her from you when, by the sacrifice of all that was dear to her, she has proved her truth—Yes, you know that she has spoken the whole, the perfect truth——”

“I know it!” exclaimed he.

“Give her up to the whole world of slanderers!—destroy her character! If now her husband separate from her, her good name is lost for ever! If now her husband protect her not——”

Her husband turned, and clasped her in his arms. Lady Davenant rose and blessed him—blessed them both; and they knelt beside her, and she joined their hands.

“Now,” said she, “I give my daughter to a husband worthy of her, and she more worthy of that noble heart than when first his. Her only fault was mine—mine—my early neglect: it is repaired—I die in peace! You make my last moments the happiest! Helen, my dearest Helen, now, and not till now, happy—perfectly happy in Love and Truth!”

In reading this very interesting work, we were less pleased with the character of Churchill, than most of the others, though it is evidently labored by the writer. It probably represents an individual or a class, and therefore may inspire more interest at home than abroad. We were not pleased with the affectation of employing French phrases, where English would answer better; there is a knowing air about the practice, more worthy of second-rate scribblers, wishing to astonish the natives, than of a lady of Miss Edgeworth’s real attainments. But the moral of the work is unexceptionable; and we believe that the moral effect of it will be such as amply to reward the excellent writer. She has called the attention of all classes,—for this book will be in every hand,—to the essential importance of truth. Sir Thomas Brown says, that the devils do not lie, for if they did hell could not subsist: how this may be, we do not know, though we never imagined that they were particularly scrupulous in regard to this indulgence; but certain it is, that a great proportion of the suffering and dissension of social life, is owing to this prevailing transgression. There is not however so much deliberate falsehood, as indifference to the truth; the latter is quite too general; and he, who is careless of the truth, is not far removed from the liar. Even by those who desire to practice the virtue, it is not always understood; some suppose sincerity to consist in blurting out their hasty and unformed opinions,—in making every man sensible of their prejudice against him, and in never suppress-

ing any idle thought or feeling, which comes into their head or heart. It is scarcely necessary to say, that when openness degenerates into brutality, as it sometimes does in those who boast of it, it ceases to be a virtue ; where it is genuine, it is kind and gentle, as well as resolved and firm. It is not truth that so often offends ; it is some passion indulged under its name ; thanks then are due to the powerful writer, who shows us what the virtue really is, and impresses us with a sense of its importance, excellence and attraction.

ART. VIII.—*Miss Peabody's Key to History.*

Key to History. Parts I., II., and III. By ELIZABETH P. PEABODY. Boston. 1833.

WE have examined, with attention, these works of a very intelligent lady, and being fully convinced of the merit of her system, we take the opportunity to recommend it, in few words, to the notice of our readers. The plan is undoubtedly formed upon correct principles of instruction, and seems to contain within itself the assurance of its own success ; but we are well aware that the value of every practical system can only be determined by experiment, and what we ask is, that the one before us may have a fair and impartial trial. Some of our most successful instructors have, we perceive, given a verdict in its favor : perhaps others, and they are many, who have long lamented the want of some such aid in this department of instruction, may find on trial that the defect is here supplied. We speak of the general system : the details may possibly be found, on experiment, to require correction and improvement ; but such alterations, if necessary, are very easily made ; and the fact that they may be necessary should not be allowed to impair the value of a system, which is, in itself and in substance, good.

The state of education in this country, so far as respects the study of history, has heretofore been sufficiently forlorn. It was regarded as an interlude, of no value, except to fill up the chasms of the graver business of instruction. Not that its importance was not understood ; but simply because the means and materials for pursuing the study were very imperfect, and